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UNCLAS MADRID 001727

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SPANISH POLICE REPORT 16 ARRESTS FOR TRAFFICKING
CHILDREN THROUGH THE CANARY ISLANDS

1. All major Spanish dailies are reporting that Spanish National Police (SNP) authorities in the Canary Islands announced May 5 that 16 people from Spain and Cape Verde had been arrested on suspicion of trafficking children from the Cape Verde Islands through the Canary Islands to France. The SNP reported that at least 179 minors were trafficked by the ring that sent children to France for prostitution, drug trafficking, and illegal adoption purposes. The three-month "Operation Stork" investigation included staking out the Gran Canaria airport after weekly charter flights from Banjul, Gambia, aroused suspicion because some mothers had taken the flights with different children during different weeks. French Air and Border Police (PAF) also participated in the investigation.

2. According to the press reports, victims were taken from the Cape Verde Islands to Dakar, Senegal, where passports and identification cards were falsified with the apparent involvement of members of the Cape Verde Embassy in Senegal. Victims then traveled by highway to Banjul, Gambia, where the traffickers had connections with an air charter service to the Canary Islands. Victims would then transfer to flights bound for Paris. The traffickers would return to Cape Verde via Lisbon to avoid the Customs Authorities in the Canary Islands.

MANZANARES